

Evidence-Tampering In Kennedy Slaying Suspected, D.A. Says

LOS ANGELES (AP). — A probe is under way to determine if anyone tampered with key exhibits used in the trial of the man convicted of killing Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, District Attorney Joseph Busch said Saturday.

He said the investigation seeks to determine if "there has been any intentional or unintentional tampering with the key exhibits involved in the trial — including the murder weapon and the bullets taken from the body of Sen. Kennedy."

There is "evidence the exhibits have been directly handled by numerous persons" in violation of a court order sealing the items, he said. A spokesman for Busch's office declined to say who the persons were.

Sirhan B. Sirhan, a 27-year-old Jordanian, convicted of shooting the New York senator June 5, 1968, at the Ambassador Hotel here, now is on San Quentin Prison's death row.

Busch said investigators learned that the court order sealing the exhibits "had been ignored and . . . the exhibits have not been properly protected by the county clerk's office."

The investigation announcement came after a report Friday night by television station KNXT here that unauthorized

persons had tampered with key exhibits in Sirhan's 17-week trial.

The station said trial evidence stored in the county clerk's office showed indications that the package seals were broken on the gun used to kill Kennedy, the bullets that killed him and the coat Kennedy was wearing when slain.

Busch said the investigation was prompted by another probe into allegations by Barbara Warner Blehr, a local lawyer, of irregularities in the ballistics investigation of the murder gun.

Mrs. Blehr last May contend-
ed that a police ballistics ex-
pert, who testified he examin-
ed the gun used to kill Kenne-
dy, actually test-fired a weap-
on other than that used by
Sirhan.

Her claim came in a letter to the city Civil Service Com-
mission in which she sought to
block appointment of the bal-
listics expert, DeWayne Wol-
fer, as permanent head of the
Los Angeles Police Depart-
ment's crime laboratory.

Last month, Theodore
Charmach, described by his
lawyer as a free-lance investi-
gative reporter, filed a suit
which accused Busch, Mayor
Sam Yorty and other officials
of "deliberately, intentionally
and knowingly suppressing
facts and evidence" in Ken-
nedy's slaying.